

**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF GEORGIA
ATLANTA DIVISION**

Rosea Jackson,)	
)	
Plaintiff,)	Civil Action File No.:
)	
v.)	
)	
Midland Credit Management,)	COMPLAINT WITH
Inc.,)	<u>JURY TRIAL DEMAND</u>
)	
Defendant.)	

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

This action for damages is based upon the Defendant's overt and intentional, unlawful conduct in the furtherance of its efforts to collect a consumer debt. The Defendant's conduct is in violation of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act (FDCPA), 15 U.S.C. 1692 *et seq.* and the Georgia Fair Business Practices Act, (GFBPA) O.C.G.A. 10-1-390 *et seq.*

PARTIES

1. Plaintiff, Rosea Jackson, is a natural person who resides in Camden County, Georgia.
2. Defendant, Midland Credit Management, Inc., is a corporation formed under the laws of the State of Kansas and registered to do business in Georgia.

Defendant may be served with process via its registered agent, Midland Funding, LLC, 260 Peachtree Street NW, Suite 2109, Atlanta, GA 30303.

JURISDICTION AND VENUE

3. This Court has federal question jurisdiction over Plaintiff's Fair Debt Collection Practices Act ("FDCPA"), 15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.*, claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1331 and 15 U.S.C. § 1692k(d). This Court has supplemental jurisdiction over Plaintiff's state law claims pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1367.

4. This Court has personal jurisdiction over Defendant because, *inter alia*, Defendants frequently and routinely conducts business in the State of Georgia, including the conduct complained of herein.

5. Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1391, venue is proper in the Northern District of Georgia because a substantial part of the events or omissions giving rise to the claims occurred in this district.

6. Pursuant to LR 3.1B(3), venue is proper in Atlanta Division because the Defendant maintains a registered agent in Fulton County which is in the Atlanta Division.

FACTUAL ALLEGATIONS

7. Plaintiff is allegedly obligated to pay a consumer debt arising out of a credit card and is therefore, a “consumer”, as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(3).

8. Defendant’s principal business is the collection of consumer accounts for its commercial benefit. Defendant regularly collects, or attempts to collect, directly or indirectly, debts owed or due, or asserted to be owed or due, to a third party.

9. Defendant uses interstate commerce and/or mail in its business in the collection of consumer debts.

10. Defendant manages, and collects upon, thousands of consumer debt accounts annually.

11. Defendant is, therefore, a “debt collector” as that term is defined by 15 U.S.C. § 1692a(6).

12. Defendant had reported certain accounts on Plaintiff’s credit report.

13. Upon reviewing her credit report, Plaintiff found accounts which she did not recognize and believed to be the product of identity theft.

14. Plaintiff filed a police report with the St. Mary’s Police Department on April 22, 2020 detailing that someone had stolen her identity and used it to open certain credit cards.

15. On June 5, 2020, Plaintiff sent a letter to Defendant stating that Defendant was currently reporting four accounts on Plaintiff's credit report which Plaintiff did not recognize and Plaintiff believed these accounts were the product of identity theft.

16. Plaintiff included a copy of the police report with her dispute letter to Defendant.

17. Despite receiving Plaintiff's dispute letter and police report, Defendant updated information to Plaintiff's Experian credit report on July 29, 2020 and failed to notate the accounts as disputed.

18. Defendant reported credit information which is known or which should be known to be false, including the failure to communicate that a disputed debt is disputed.

19. Defendant's conduct contained communications which were false, misleading, and deceptive in connection with the collection of a debt.

20. Plaintiff was directly harmed by Defendant's actions.

21. Plaintiff suffered anxiety and worry that these debts would stay on her credit report even though she believed they were the product of identity theft.

22. Plaintiff suffered her anxiety and worry as a direct result of Defendant's credit reporting.

23. Defendant's false representations about Plaintiff's credit history were published to third parties.

24. Plaintiff took time out of her day to seek legal counsel about Defendant's actions.

INJURIES-IN-FACT

25. The FDCPA provides consumers with "statutorily-created rights to be free from 'being subjected to false, deceptive, unfair, or unconscionable means to collect a debt.'" *McCamis v. Servis One, Inc.*, No. 8:16-CV-1130-T-30AEP, 2016 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 99492 (M.D. Fla. July 29, 2016); *Church v. Accretive Health, Inc.*, 654 Fed. Appx. 990, 2016 U.S. App. LEXIS 12414, 2016 WL 3611543 (11th Cir. 2016).

26. An injury-in-fact sufficient to satisfy Article III standing requirements "may exist solely by virtue of statutes creating legal rights, the invasion of which creates standing." *Church*, at 993, quoting *Havens Realty Corp. v. Coleman*, 455 U.S. 363, 373, 102 S. Ct. 1114, 71 L. Ed. 2d 214 (1982).

27. Violation of statutory rights are not a "hypothetical or uncertain" injury, but one "that Congress has elevated to the status of a legally cognizable injury through the FDCPA." *McCamis*, at 4, citing *Church*, at 3.

28. Defendant is subjecting Plaintiff to false, deceptive, unfair, and unconscionable means to collect the debt.

29. Defendants acts and omissions caused particularized harm to the Plaintiff in that she was suffered worry and anxiety that these debts would remain on her credit report, Defendant published false information about Plaintiff to third parties causing damage to her reputation, and Plaintiff took uncompensated time to discuss her situation with counsel.

30. Accordingly, through the suffering of actual damages and a violation of Plaintiffs' statutorily created rights under the FDCPA, Plaintiffs have suffered an injury-in-fact sufficient to establish Article III standing.

DAMAGES

31. As a result of the Defendant's actions and/or omissions, Plaintiff has suffered actual damages, including but not limited to the following:

a.) Being subjected to false, deceptive, unfair, and unconscionable debt collection practices;

b.) Uncompensated time expended away from work and/or activities of daily living, to confer with counsel regarding the Defendant's collection efforts; and,

c.) Anxiety and worry due to concerns that she might suffer negative credit reporting forever for debts which were the product of identity theft; and

d.) Having false information about Plaintiff's credit worthiness published to third parties as a direct result of Defendant's actions.

CAUSES OF ACTION

COUNT I

VIOLATIONS OF THE FAIR DEBT COLLECTION PRACTICES ACT

15 U.S.C. § 1692 *et seq.*

32. Plaintiff incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 31 as though fully stated herein.

Violations of 15 U.S.C. § 1692e and its subparts

33. 15 U.S.C. § 1692e specifically prohibits the use of any false, deceptive, or misleading representations or means in connection with the collection of any debt.

34. The use of "or" in § 1692e means a representation violates the FDCPA if it is false or deceptive or misleading. *Bourff v. Rubin Lublin, LLC*, 674 F.3d 1238, 1241 (11th Cir. 2012).

35. The standard in determining the nature of any such representation is that of the "least sophisticated consumer." Its purpose is to protect "naive

consumers" with a minimal understanding of personal finance and debt collection. *LeBlanc v. Unifund CCR Partners*, 601 F.3d 1185, 1194 (11th Cir. 2010).

36. Moreover, the least sophisticated consumer is not to be held to the same standard as a reasonably prudent consumer. The least sophisticated consumer, though not unreasonable, is "ignorant" and "unthinking," "gullible," and of "below-average sophistication or intelligence," *Pinson v. JPMorgan Chase Bank, Nat'l Ass'n*, No. 16-17107, 2019 U.S. App. LEXIS 33662, at 12-13 (11th Cir. Nov. 12, 2019), quoting *Clomon v. Jackson*, 988 F.2d 1314, 1318 (2nd Cir. 1993).

37. A false representation in connection with the collection of a debt is sufficient to violate the FDCPA, even if it is not alleged or proven to be misleading or deceptive.

38. Defendant reported credit information which is known or which should be known to be false, including the failure to communicate that a disputed debt is disputed.

39. Defendant's actions caused Plaintiff anxiety and worry, caused false information about her credit worthiness to be reported to third parties, and required Plaintiff to seek legal counsel about Defendant's actions.

40. Defendant's communications were in violation of 15 U.S.C. §§ 1692e, e(8), and e(10) among others.

41. As a result of Defendant's violations of the FDCPA, Defendant is liable to Plaintiffs for actual damages as described herein, statutory damages in the amount of \$1,000.00, costs of this action and reasonable attorney's fees as determined by the Court as mandated by 15 U.S.C. § 1692k.

COUNT II

VIOLATIONS OF THE GEORGIA FAIR BUSINESS PRACTICES ACT

O.C.G.A. § 10-1-390, *et seq.*

42. Plaintiff incorporates by reference paragraphs 1 through 41 as though fully stated herein.

43. O.C.G.A. § 10-1-390 *et seq.* is commonly known as the "Fair Business Practices Act of 1975" (the "GFBPA").

44. The purpose of the GFBPA, is to protect consumers from unfair and/or deceptive practices in the conduct of any trade or commerce in part or wholly in the state. O.C.G.A. § 10-1-391.

45. O.C.G.A. § 10-1-391 directs that the GFPBA is to be interpreted and applied liberally and in harmony with the Federal Trade Commission Act, 15 U.S.C. § 45(a)(1), which implements the FDCPA.

46. O.C.G.A. § 10-1-393(a) of the GFBPA broadly prohibits unfair and/or deceptive business practices.

47. Defendant intentionally engaged in unfair and deceptive business practices, as set forth herein, in an effort to collect a consumer debt.

48. Defendant's conduct has implications for the consuming public in general.

49. Defendant's conduct negatively impacts the consumer marketplace.

50. Collecting a debt incurred during a consumer transaction could harm the general consuming public if conducted via deceptive acts or practices and clearly falls within the parameters of the GFBPA. Thus, a violation of the FDCPA constitutes a violation of the GFBPA. *See 1st Nationwide Collection Agency, Inc. v. Werner*, 288 Ga. App. 457, 459 (2007).

51. Upon information and belief, Defendant does not maintain a place of business in Georgia and has no assets in Georgia, thus relieving Plaintiffs of the Notice and Demand requirements of O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(b).

52. As a result of Defendant's violations of O.C.G.A. § 10-1-393(a), Plaintiff is entitled to recover general damages pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(a).

53. As a result of Defendant's intentional violations of O.C.G.A. § 10-1-393(a), Plaintiff is entitled to recover exemplary damages pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(a).

54. As a result of Defendant's intentional violations of O.C.G.A. § 10-1-393(a), Plaintiff is entitled to recover treble damages pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(c).

55. Plaintiff is entitled to recover reasonable attorney's fees and expenses of litigation pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(d).

TRIAL BY JURY

56. Plaintiff is entitled to and hereby requests a trial by jury.

WHEREFORE, Plaintiff prays that judgment be entered against Defendant for:

- a.) Plaintiff's actual damages;
- b.) Statutory damages pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k;
- c.) Reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to 15 U.S.C. § 1692k
- d.) General, exemplary, and treble damages pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(a) & (c);
- e.) Reasonable attorney's fees and costs pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 10-1-399(d);
- and
- f.) Such other and further relief as may be just and proper.

Respectfully submitted this 26th day of August, 2020.

BERRY & ASSOCIATES

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